



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.7350 | FAX (517) 373.9228

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/patterson/

For Immediate Release
January 5, 2005

Contact: Christopher Kelley
Phone (517) 373-7350

Patterson's Watershed Alliance Bill signed into law

LANSING – Legislation creating and legally defining the concept of a voluntary “Watershed Alliance” was signed by the governor Monday.

Senate Bill 1432 (Public Act 517), sponsored by Sen. Bruce Patterson, is for the local protection and enhancement of Michigan's waters -- rivers, streams, lakes and ponds.

“This act can serve every community in Michigan since every city, town, or township is located in some watershed or other,” Patterson said. “Water is vital to us all. Protecting and enhancing our waters is something we can do more effectively by joining in voluntary regional alliances.

“Watersheds create a natural unity already, so why shouldn't we take the hint and capitalize on it for mutual benefit? It doesn't happen often, but everyone in the Legislature saw the logic of this and gave it unanimous support.”

Already, interest has been shown in this pioneering legislation of Sen. Patterson from as far away as California. Local credit is given to the Friends of the Rouge River, who formed a prototype to study, protect, and enhance the watercourses of that river system. Now such organizations have legal standing, though no grant of taxing power.

“It gives me great pleasure to see this through to unanimous passage in both houses of the Legislature, and now the governor's signature,” Patterson said. “It fulfills things she has urged, namely, local cooperation. Alliances will be able to gain funding more readily by working together for an entire watershed.”

Stormwater management is just one of many areas in which local cooperation can achieve area-wide benefit. Compliance with federal mandates on stormwater can be more efficient. In an alliance, local entities will be able to pool resources and save tax money. They will be on a better footing to seek grant money for joint projects.

“I applaud Senator Patterson's leadership and commitment to this important step for the environment and local management of our water resources,” said Kurt Heise, Wayne County's Department of Environment director. “Now we have the bipartisan solution to addressing long-range planning for watersheds. This bill will allow local governments throughout Michigan to work more cooperatively.

“This will signal state fostering of partnerships of local governments and other entities in meeting federal requirements. We can move promptly with this in 2005. I commend Senator Patterson, Senator Birkholz and Senate and House leaders on both sides of the aisle.”

Heise echoed Patterson's hope for local savings. “Watershed alliances will result in less duplication of efforts and will save money for local governments. It is a tremendous win for everyone.”

“This will allow alliances more strength on the large issue of watershed management,” said Carolyn McCaughey, executive director of the Friends of the Rouge. “That strength will be beneficial to all watersheds.”